



# Wild Times

## *The Habitat Connection*

### SCURRY So, where do these nongame mammals live? Just like big

Wyoming wildlife managers call moose, elk, deer, antelope, big horn sheep and mountain goats Big Game. Black bears and mountain lions are Trophy Game. Beaver, marten, mink and bobcats are called Furbearers. But what about those mammals that cannot be hunted? Do you know what those animals are called?

The Wyoming Game and Fish calls creatures that cannot be hunted or trapped nongame mammals, and there are about 80 of them in our state. This group includes the pygmy shrew, swift fox, black-footed ferret and several species of bats.

game or birds, nongame mammals live almost everywhere. But each has special needs, or habitat, to live and grow. Good habitat has the things even very small creatures that scurry on the ground need to survive: food, water, shelter and space.

The little brown myotis, a species of bat, can live just about anywhere—you'll find them in forests, sagebrush grasslands and even around cities and towns. The plains pocket gopher has different needs; it likes the open spaces of Wyoming's grasslands. The Pinyon mouse is even pickier – it depends specifically on pine and juniper trees for its food and shelter.

This fall and winter, try to find and observe some of Wyoming's nongame mammals. Look high in the sky for bats, study the trees for squirrels of every shape and size and watch where you step for mice, voles or gophers. These creatures may not be big game, but they are a big part of Wyoming's wild landscape!



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# FIELD Wildlife Journal

## Glenn Pauley

STATE WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN  
COORDINATOR

**W**ould you like a job conserving Wyoming's wild animals and their habitats? When you think of a career in wildlife, you may think of a game warden, wildlife biologist or fish biologist. But there are lots of other jobs that involve helping wildlife...just ask Glenn Pauley. He works as the State Wildlife

Action Plan Coordinator for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department.

**W**yoming has more than 800 species of fish and wildlife and it's the job of the Game and Fish to

manage all these animals. The

Game and Fish uses the wildlife action plan to help take care of all of Wyoming's wildlife, now and in the future. The plan also helps make sure that none of Wyoming's species are harmed to the point that they become endangered or worse yet, extinct.

**P**auley helps wildlife by writing and overseeing the wildlife action plan. He gathers information from biologists

and other wildlife professionals about all the different species, how the animals are doing and what might threaten those species in the future. He also works with conservation organizations, farmers, ranchers and others in the public to make sure they have a say about how wildlife are managed. After all, Wyoming's wildlife belongs to all of us!

**P**auley says the best part of his job is that he gets to learn about a lot of different wildlife species, like sage grouse, Columbia spotted frogs, swift fox and pikas. He combines his writing and people skills with his knowledge of wildlife and the environment to help make sure Wyoming stays wild!



# WILDLIFE PROFILES





# WILDLIFE PROFILES

## Northern Flying Squirrel

**Size:** 11-12 inches in length; 3-6 ounces

**Eats:** mushrooms, nuts, tree sap, buds and flowers

**Lives:** dense coniferous forests in northwestern and northeastern Wyoming

Flying squirrels don't actually fly. Instead, they glide by launching off the tops of trees and extending flaps of skin that stretch from their front feet to their back legs. Their furry tails flatten in flight to help with stabilization.

The northern flying squirrel has silky fur that is gray with white tips. They nest in holes in trees, and sometimes use holes created by woodpeckers. They are active the whole year, but are nocturnal, so they only come out to feed at night.

## Pika

**Size:** 4-8 inches in length; 4-8 ounces

**Eats:** grasses, sedges and thistles

**Lives:** rocky mountain areas and boulder covered hills at high elevations

The pika may look like a mouse or a hamster, but it is actually a member of the hare and rabbit family. They are chalky gray to brown with short legs and no visible tail. Pikas like to perch on rocks and are active in the morning and late afternoon.

In summer, you might find a pika building piles of food in the sun that look like little haystacks. That's how the pika dries and stores food to eat in the winter. If you get too close, the pika might sound an alarm call - a shrill whistle or noise that can sound like a dog's squeaky toy.

## Wolverine

**Size:** 22-55 pounds, about the size of a medium-sized dog

**Eats:** meat and plants, mostly carrion (animal carcasses) in the winter

**Lives:** mountains in western and northwestern Wyoming

The wolverine is the largest land-dwelling species in the weasel family. It is stocky and strong and looks like a small bear, giving it the nickname "skunk bear."

The wolverine has thick, dark, oily fur that is resistant to frost. It has scent glands that it uses to mark its territory. The smell is so strong; some people call them "nasty cats." Wolverines are very rare in Wyoming and cannot be hunted or trapped.

The wolverine will be the featured species on the 2011 Wyoming Conservation Stamp.

## Muskrat

**Size:** 16-24 inches in length, 2 to 4 pounds

**Eats:** cattails, aquatic plants, small fish and turtles

**Lives:** wetlands across the state

Though their name is muskrat, these creatures really aren't rats at all, instead belonging to the same family as voles and lemmings. The name muskrat comes from the two scent glands near its tail that give off a musky odor.

Musk rats spend much of their time in the water. In fact, they can swim underwater for up to 18 minutes! They can even close off their ears to keep the water out. Look for muskrats in wetlands and marshy areas at night or near dawn or dusk.



# Our Wildlife Heritage

## WYOMING'S BFF, THE BLACK-FOOTED FERRET

**B**lack-footed ferrets are one of the most endangered mammals in the world. In fact, until about thirty years ago, scientists thought these ferrets were extinct. Have you heard the story of the black-footed ferret's rediscovery and recovery?

**B**lack-footed ferrets made their homes across the United States prairies, including Wyoming, and ate prairie dogs for almost 90 percent of their diet. As people moved west across the U.S., black-footed ferret habitat changed drastically.

Settlers plowed the land to plant crops for food, grazed cattle and sheep on the prairie grasses and poisoned unwanted wildlife species like coyotes, foxes and badgers. The prairie dog towns that the black-footed ferrets depended on were destroyed, and black-footed ferret populations were destroyed too. By 1974, biologists thought the ferret was probably extinct.

**B**ut, lucky for the black-footed ferret, a farm dog named Shep found a ferret in 1981 near Meeteetse, Wyoming. The rancher could not identify the animal Shep had brought home, so he called a taxidermist. The taxidermist realized it was the very rare black-footed ferret and contacted wildlife professionals.

**B**iologists found another 130 ferrets living outside of Meeteetse and used that colony to learn more about the life history and behavior of these secretive mammals. When disease killed all but 18 of these ferrets, wildlife officials took the surviving ferrets into captivity to try and save the species.

**S**urvival of the black-footed ferret was important because they are part of our natural history and wildlife heritage. From those 18 ferrets captured long ago, about 1,000 ferrets now live in the wild. Each year, 140 to 150 young ferrets are released into the wild in 19 reintroduction sites, including Wyoming! For a species believed to have disappeared, that's one incredible tale of survival.





# Around Wyoming

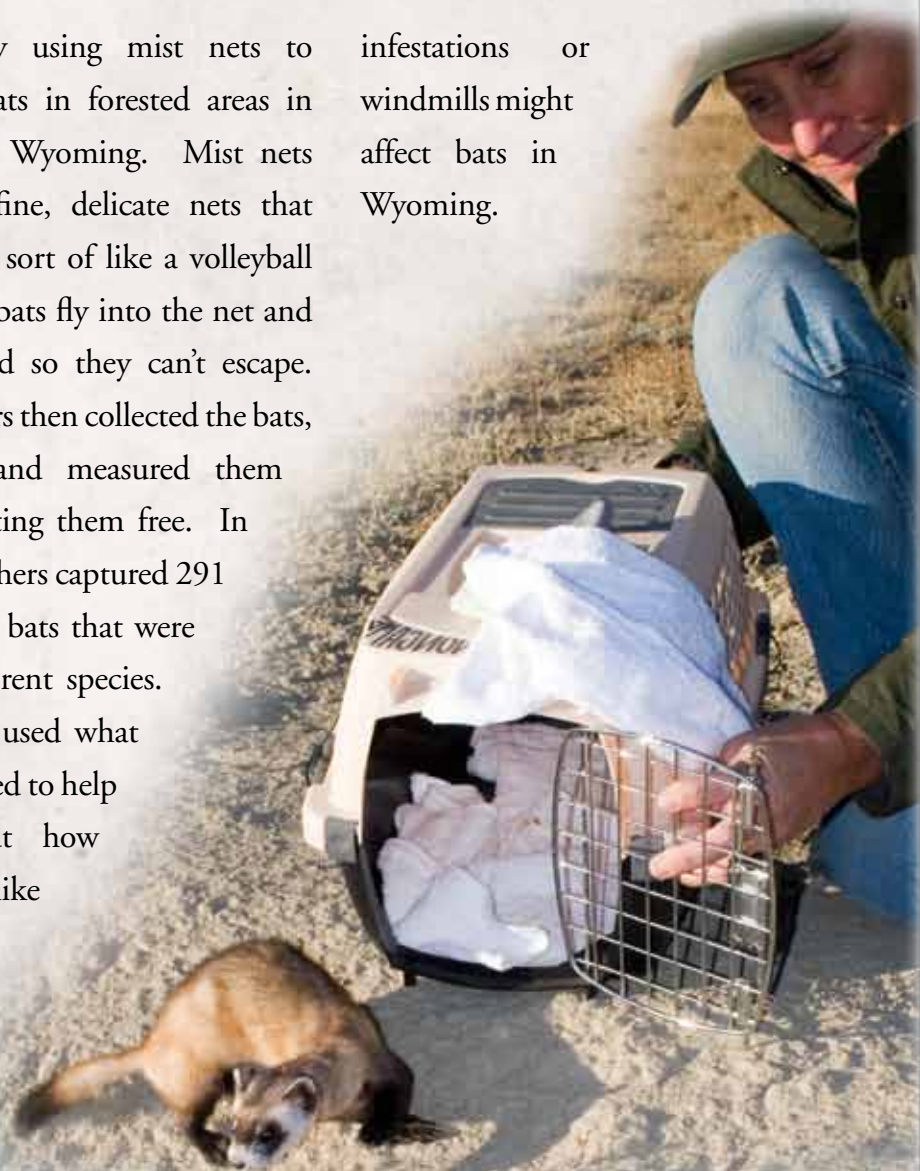
**Each year, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and other wildlife agencies conduct research projects to learn more about our wildlife. These projects study wildlife across the state and help biologists learn more about how many of these animals live in Wyoming, what they need for habitat, or how other activities that happen in our state may be affecting wildlife.**

**W**hen biologists wanted a better count of black-footed ferrets in Wyoming, a survey project was started. In September, volunteers used spotlights at night to find the ferrets. The volunteers found the ferrets by the shine of the ferrets' eyes in a spotlight at night and set a live trap where they had seen the ferrets. Captured ferrets were counted and measured, then returned unharmed to their burrows. In all, the volunteers spent 334 hours trying to find ferrets!

**B**iologists also wanted to know about Wyoming's bats. This two-year study

started by using mist nets to capture bats in forested areas in northwest Wyoming. Mist nets are very fine, delicate nets that are set up sort of like a volleyball net. The bats fly into the net and get tangled so they can't escape. Researchers then collected the bats, counted and measured them before setting them free. In all, researchers captured 291 individual bats that were eight different species. Biologists used what they learned to help figure out how things like logging, insect

infestations or windmills might affect bats in Wyoming.







# Outdoor Classroom

## GIVE A BAT A HOME! BUILD A BACKYARD BAT HOUSE

**D**id you know that Wyoming is home to eight different species of bats? Some people are afraid of bats and believe they are dirty and carry diseases. But bats are amazing mammals that play an important role in the balance of humans and nature. They are very clean animals. They do not get caught in your hair or chew through the attic of your house. They won't bother birds, pets or people. But they will eat bugs!

**B**ats eat insects, especially mosquitoes. In fact, a small bat can devour more than 600 mosquitoes in a single hour. They also eat wasps, beetles and moths. Having bats nesting around your property is a great way to keep your yard and home bug-free.

**B**uilding a bat house can help you conserve and observe one of Wyoming's most interesting non-game species. It's an easy project you and an adult can do in a day. Bat houses are designed with shallow construction because bats like dark, cramped spaces for nesting. You can build a bat house from scratch following simple instructions, you can build one from a pre-made kit, or you can purchase a finished bat house and install it in your yard. All three options are a fun project that can provide important habitat for an important species!

**B**ats tend to fly along streams and creeks, so a bat house near a natural water source is an ideal location. Plan to mount your bat house on a pole or

side of a building. Bats tend to shy away from houses mounted in trees. The house should be mounted 15 to 20 feet in the air in an area that gets 6 to 10 hours of sunlight a day.

**T**ry these websites for bat house plans, kits and other bat information or contact your local Game and Fish office for more bat information.

-[www.batconservation.org](http://www.batconservation.org)

-[www.batcon.org](http://www.batcon.org)

-[www.batmanagement.com](http://www.batmanagement.com)



# ▶ TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE ◀

## Mammal Mania

Can you find these Wyoming mammals in the puzzle below?

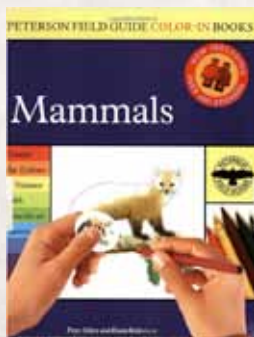
Bat	Ferret	Fox
Gopher	Marten	Mink
Mouse	Muskrat	Otter
Pika	Porcupine	Raccoon
Squirrel	Vole	Wolverine



N S R J R I R X R O R J U Z M  
E C Q I O A Y E O T X G T U U  
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R I P C I T E R R E F I V E K  
A J O N O R V Z E U A L N D R  
M O N S Y A R N D N C G O K A  
N A F R Z T I E G M C D E Y T  
M B O O E R M O L P X H W D M  
F I D N E H K F G A M F T H Q  
K S F V T M P G I E F K V D V  
F U L U D T W O X Y A I G O F  
P O Q I G E C J G Y P N L V C  
W P O R C U P I N E I E G P G  
I J A M O U S E R D K T A B W  
X F H L Q Y O H E H A X P N O

## ▶ LEARNING LINKS ◀

Books: *Peterson Field Guide Color-In Book: Mammals*  
Coloring your own field guide is a fun way to learn about mammals. Each drawing has a brief description to teach you more about the animal. Color in magic marker, colored pencil or even watercolors, whatever you prefer.



Books: *My Side of the Mountain*, by Jean Craighead George

Every kid thinks about running away, but usually turn around before the end of the block. Sam Gribble keeps going - all the way to the Catskill Mountains of upstate New York. There he makes his home in a huge hollowed-out tree, with only his wits for survival and a falcon and weasel for his friends. Sam learns to live off the land, and grows up a little in the process.



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